**Chichen Itza (Chee-cha-nee-sa)**



Deep in the jungles of Mexico you will find the ancient **site** of Chichen Itza. People are not sure when exactly it was built or by who but some people think that Chichen Itza "chee-cha nee-sa" was created by people called the Itzles in 445 BC. About 800 years later, the city was empty.  Why the people left is still a **mystery**. The people made many pictures of snakes with feathers, eagles and jaguars.

Their castle looks like a pyramid and is called El Castillo. It is 75 feet tall. The large steps end in two big serpent (snake) heads. The Mayans knew a lot about the **calendar**. On the first day of spring and the first day of fall, the sun casts shadows on the steps that look like a snake **wiggling** down the pyramid.



To the Maya this was a lucky **symbol**. It meant the golden sun had entered the earth, meaning it was time to plant corn.

**Archeologists** have found lots of gold and jade at the in Chichen Itza in a deep hole with water at the bottom. This well was used strictly for **ceremonies**, not for drinking. According to legend, people were **sacrificed** here.  They also tossed copper, gold, and jade (green stone) offerings into the hole.

By studying the ancient site, scientists can tell that the people from Chichen Itza had a good understanding of mathematics and had a good knowledge of building engineering. Furthermore, the Mayans were very interested with in **astronomy** (the stars). These people also had a written language. Moreover, there are signs that the people played games because there is **evidence** that they played ancient ball games.

Scientists found tools that the people must have used to build their **monuments**. Scientists think that they put large rocks from a **quarry** on platforms and then rolled them over logs to a river and floated them down the river to the place where they now stand.



**Historians** have wondered what the monuments represent or mean. Some believe that the ancient monuments were created to honour a leader and that these monuments were buried or destroyed when a new leader came to power.

Evidence suggests that the **civilization** disappeared about 2,500 years ago. Maybe this ancient world disappeared because of drought, disease, war or other problems? No one knows for sure.